

this country, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and as we strive to make this a more perfect union.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AWARENESS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I wish to speak on behalf of our service men and women suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. Tomorrow—June 27—is National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day, so designated by the U.S. Senate in a unanimous action 2 years ago. I am calling on all of my colleagues in this body to redouble our efforts to help veterans and servicemembers who are struggling with PTSD each and every day. I remain committed to provide all necessary assistance to people who have this problem as the result of their faithful military service because it is one of the solemn obligations we have as a nation. For this reason I supported Senator HEITKAMP's bi-partisan resolution designating June as National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder—PTSD—Awareness Month.

With the military drawdown currently underway, I am concerned that our Nation will not adequately address the PTSD-related issues that many of our veterans and servicemembers face. I find it deeply troubling that, on average, 22 veterans commit suicide every day. Furthermore, veterans who have post-traumatic stress are at greater risk for drug abuse and alcoholism. The abuse of these substances often amounts to a form of a self-medication because the servicemember or veteran is unable or unwilling to seek help.

I strongly believe that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day is an important step in highlighting these issues. Our challenge is to help every veteran suffering from these invisible wounds seek help and cope with their very real injury. There is a perceived stigma that makes veterans reluctant to seek help and feeds negative perceptions which can cause employers not to hire veterans. Educating veterans and the public about this affliction and the support networks available will bring to light a very real and deadly epidemic among servicemembers. Too often we say "thank you" to servicemembers and veterans without really knowing what we are thanking them for, because we don't bother to understand their struggles. Addressing this disconnect would make a world of difference in helping this population mitigate the effects of post-traumatic stress.

The work being done today to address this issue proves that post-traumatic stress does not have to be a permanently disabling condition. Within my own State of Maryland, organizations such as Fort Detrick's Army Medical Research & Materiel Command are making amazing advances in developing post-traumatic stress treatments

that were unimaginable just a few years ago. As for present treatments, the Warrior Canine Connection is an excellent example of an organization that is helping veterans here and now. This organization, located in Brookeville, provides therapeutic working dogs to veterans and servicemembers, and it also conducts research that strives to further improve upon the positive effects that these service animals have on the veterans and servicemembers. The Warrior Canine Connection has helped countless veterans relieve the symptoms of post-traumatic stress, enabling them to regain their status as healthy and productive members of our society.

I am not at all surprised that these servicemembers and veterans have bounced back wonderfully after being treated for their post-traumatic stress. If a soldier, sailor, airman or Marine is able to excel on the battlefield, then I see no reason why that same person should not be able to excel in the classroom, in a hospital, or in the boardroom. I refuse to believe that our veterans and servicemembers are "damaged goods" because of their military service.

One only needs to look at our history to see that our society benefits greatly when we provide our veterans and servicemembers with the assistance they need to transition successfully to civilian life. During World War II, American servicemembers encountered some of the most difficult combat conditions in human history. Yet when World War II veterans returned home, did they become a burden to their nation because of those combat experiences? Not at all. Returning World War II veterans spearheaded the work that made our country more prosperous than it had ever been. Veterans can be the engine to a great economy that sustains a flourishing middle class. I believe World War II veterans were able to succeed in the civilian workforce because after the war, they returned to a society that understood and genuinely respected their military service.

This week I had the privilege of visiting the Veterans Health Care System in Baltimore, MD. America cannot break our promise to those who have sacrificed so much to protect our great Nation. We have seen bipartisan progress toward correcting the systemic problems facing our veterans' health care system, and I am encouraged by the additional staff and resources being deployed in Baltimore. Most Maryland veterans are receiving quality health care at world-class facilities close to home. But the wounds inflicted by this national breach of trust will take more time to heal as we renew and fulfill our commitment to care for the health and well-being of our veterans.

I am continually in awe of the extraordinary men and women serving at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center who make it their daily mission to provide the highest level of

support to our wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers and their families. A testament to their commitment is the Department of Defense Deployment Health Clinical Center in Bethesda, MD, which has developed an intensive, 3-week, multi-disciplinary treatment program called The Specialized Care Program. This program is designed for servicemembers experiencing PTSD or experiencing difficulties readjusting to life upon redeployment after serving in Operations IRAQ or ENDURING FREEDOM. This program is for patients who have had other treatments for PTSD, or perhaps depression, but who continue to experience symptoms that interfere with their ability to function.

In light of the upcoming July 4 holiday, providing assistance to veterans who have served our Nation so diligently must be a priority. As we celebrate our Independence Day, we must also address the needs of those who have defended our liberty and have allowed it to thrive. Without the men and women who fought for the United States' freedom in 1776 and those who bravely do so today, our country simply would not exist. With this in mind, we as Americans ought to support our veterans to the best of our abilities and present them with the necessary assistance and resources they may require. Whether we succeed in this endeavor will be a significant measure of our Nation's fidelity towards our veterans and its moral character. I am committed to making sure this population receives treatment for post-traumatic stress, should they need it. The United States is the strongest nation in the world because of our veterans and servicemembers. We owe it to bring them back home not just in body, but in mind and spirit, as well.

RWANDA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, rising from the ashes of the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan people can be proud of the progress their country has made over the past two decades. Through reconciliation and resilience, Rwanda has entered a new phase of economic growth and is working to protect civilians in other countries through its vital contributions to global peacekeeping missions. The world has cheered these successes, but today we have cause for concern.

To cement its legacy as a world leader and model for development, there is in Rwanda today a clear need to ensure space for a thriving civil society—a hallmark of any democracy. I am deeply troubled by reports of shrinking space for dissenting voices. Rwanda's domestic human rights movement has been profoundly constrained by a combination of intimidation and stigmatization, threats, harassment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, infiltration, and administrative obstacles. The government's actions to censor domestic and international human rights